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DEFINITION - A mail server (also known as a mail transfer agent or MTA, a mail transport agent, a mail router or an Internet mailer) is an application that receives incoming e-mail from local users (people within the same domain) and remote senders and forwards outgoing e-mail for delivery. A computer dedicated to running such applications is also called a mail server. Microsoft Exchange, gmail, Exim and sendmail are among the more common mail server programs.

The mail server works in conjunction with other programs to make up what is sometimes referred to as a messaging system. A messaging system includes all the applications necessary to keep e-mail moving as it should. When you send an e-

mail message, your e-mail program, such as Outlook or Eudora, forwards the message to your mail server, which in turn forwards it either to another mail server or to a holding area on the same server called a message store to be forwarded later. As a rule, the system uses SMTP (Simple Mail Transfer Protocol) or ESMTP (extended SMTP) for sending e-mail, and either POP3 (Post Office Protocol 3) or IMAP (Internet Message Access Protocol) for receiving e-mail.

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